



DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
PARENTS AS TEACHERS PROGRAM

**From The Office Of State Auditor
Claire McCaskill**

*The Parents as Teachers program is well received
and managed in accordance with state mandates.
With some enhancements, the program can achieve
greater success.*

Report No. 2002-107
October 1, 2002
www.auditor.state.mo.us

PERFORMANCE AUDIT



Office of
Missouri State Auditor
Claire McCaskill

October 2002

Minor improvements to Parents as Teachers program could increase current success

Auditors found the \$30.3 million state-funded parent education program - Parents as Teachers - is run fairly by the education department in 522 school districts. Changing procedures for allocating program funding and monitoring program expenditures would further improve the program.

Program participants called program successful

Eighty-nine percent of the participants surveyed by auditors (187 current and inactive parent educators and 64 program coordinators) said the program met its goal. About 81 percent said the program successfully reached new parents. (See page 3)

Program lost some funds which went unused

In fiscal year 2001, 85 schools returned more than \$288,000 of the \$30.3 million program funds to the department after not serving enough families as set in quotas. One school returned \$66,000, while two schools returned all the money received. These funds could not be reallocated to other schools in need because the funds went back to the state's General Revenue Fund at fiscal year end. If the district required interim reporting of progress toward the family served quotas, the state could redistribute the "unused" funds to other programs. (See page 8)

More monitoring needed of program expenditures

Department officials do not require school districts to submit actual program expenditure reports for review and do not analyze expenditures during routine monitoring visits or evaluations. Department officials only request expenditure information after complaints occur or an evaluation shows an accounting issue. (See page 9)

Allocating funds off census data does not work

Department officials allocate program funds based on the census population of children from birth to age five in a district. But census data often misrepresents the area by the time the department uses it. In fiscal year 2001, 39 districts served more than 100 percent of the district's families counted in the 2000 census data. As a result, in the next fiscal year, department officials set quotas above 100 percent of the families. (See page 7)

SHEETS
MOTLEY
YELLOW

Parent educator pay and some unsupportive districts curbs recruitment

Fifty percent of the inactive parent educators surveyed said they left the program to become full-time teachers for increased pay and benefits. Missouri parent educator pay ranged from approximately \$20,000 to less than \$1,500 per educator per year, according to 1999 state data. The national average pay for a parent educator equaled \$35,000 annually for a 40-hour work week and \$17,500 for a 20-hour work week. (See page 5)

Forty-three percent of the current educators surveyed wanted more support from the district. Survey respondents said some administrators and school boards did not care about the program, did not provide office supplies or a work space.

Reports are available on our web site: www.auditor.state.mo.us

**DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
PARENTS AS TEACHERS PROGRAM**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
STATE AUDITOR’S REPORT	1
RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	2
The Parents as Teachers Program is Successful and with a Few Enhancements Could Achieve Better Outcomes	2
Conclusion.....	11
Recommendations	11
 APPENDIXES	
I. OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY	15
II. BACKGROUND.....	17
III. SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS.....	18
A. CURRENT PARENT EDUCATORS.....	18
B. COORDINATORS.....	22
C. INACTIVE PARENT EDUCATORS.....	24



CLAIRE C. McCASKILL
Missouri State Auditor

Honorable Bob Holden, Governor
and
Members of the General Assembly
and
D. Kent King, Commissioner
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

The State Auditor's Office audited the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Parents as Teachers program. The objectives of the audit were to determine if the Parents as Teachers program is effectively managed and state appropriated funds were spent as intended.

We concluded the Parents as Teachers program has been successful in reaching families and providing services. Program administrators have properly followed state mandates and provided funding to all school districts. Internal program evaluations and state audit survey responses show a high rate of satisfaction with the program. The audit identified some enhancements to program management that would provide even better outcomes.

The audit included an assessment of management controls related to the oversight of school district expenditures of state funds allocated to the program. We determined whether there were policies and procedures for reviewing district expenditures. We tested the budget and expenditure reporting processes and found weaknesses in oversight of these processes.

The audit was conducted in accordance with applicable standards contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, and included such tests of the procedures and records as were considered appropriate under the circumstances.

Claire McCaskill
State Auditor

The following auditors contributed to this report:

Director of Audits: William D. Miller, CIA
Audit Manager: Debra S. Lewis, CPA
Audit Staff: Monique Williams, CPA
Kim Fowler

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Parents as Teachers Program is Successful and with a Few Enhancements Could Achieve Better Outcomes

Program managers administered the Parents as Teachers program (program) fairly and followed state mandates. Audit tests disclosed overall satisfaction with the program by participants and administrators. Eighty-nine percent of the parent educators and program coordinators surveyed stated the program achieved its goal, and 98 percent of the program coordinators surveyed said their parent educators were motivated. However, the program did not use all provided funds and had to return some funds to the General Revenue Fund at the end of fiscal year 2001; thus making the funds unavailable to the program. The department cannot ensure the funding allocation methodology appropriately matches funding to school district needs. In addition, the allocation methodology caused the unused funds, as did the use of unrealistic quotas for some school districts. The program could improve results with enhancements to (1) funding allocation method, (2) oversight of funds spent at school districts, and (3) publicity of the program.

Description of Parents as Teachers Program

Sections 178.691 through 178.699, RSMo 2000, govern the Parents as Teachers program administered by the Division of School Improvement - Early Childhood Education, within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (department). These statutes (known as the Early Childhood Development Act) require every school district to provide an approved parent education program and screening services to families with children up to 5 years old.

Parents as Teachers is a home-community -school partnership, which supports parents as their child's first and most influential teachers. Parents in every Missouri school district can participate in the services, which include personal visits from certified parent educators,¹ group meetings, developmental screenings and links with other community resources. Districts that are not able to offer an approved program shall enter into a contract to provide parent education. The general goals of these programs are to:

- Inform parents of possible delays in their child's development as well as normal or advanced progression.
- Provide appropriate and useful information and guidance to parents as their child's primary and most important teachers.

The statutes also establish uniform state reimbursement paid by the department for districts providing parent education directly or by contract.

According to the 2000 census, there are 369,898 children under age five in Missouri. Approximately 10 percent of those children will require special education and an additional 15

¹ A certified parent educator is defined as the person(s) hired by the school district responsible for delivering direct parent education services to families.

percent will require less intense services, such as remedial services during their school years.² The department received the same appropriations of \$30.3 million in fiscal years 2001 and 2002 to fund the program. These funds are allocated to 522 school districts based on U. S. census data and analyses showing the number of children (birth to age five) living in the school district.

Participants, parents and administrators view the program as successful

Survey responses from 187 current and inactive parent educators and 64 program coordinators showed 89 percent said the program met its goals and 81 percent said the program successfully reached families with newborns. Survey respondents stated the program succeeded because it (1) empowered parents to act in the best interest of their child, (2) increased parenting skills and knowledge, (3) identified developmental delays in children early, and (4) introduced children to the school atmosphere early. Some survey comments were:

Program helps
identify
developmental
delays

- "I think PAT³ is a fantastic program. I am a 15 yr. Parent Educator. I have seen it grow into a great program. I'm very proud of how our program has grown the last 3 yrs...."
- "I believe that PAT is one of the most innovative programs that is available to all parents of young children. The impact of the program will not completely be seen until these children are parents."
- "I was a parent in the program 15 years ago and I have always admired this program and it's work. I have been a Parent Educator for 5½ years and I am still learning, about children, about parents, and about myself. I am honored to touch so many lives and to play a part in our newest generation of learning."
- "I believe in the PAT program wholeheartedly. I have seen parents make good decisions on raising their child/children after reading PAT material and visiting with their educator."

Program evaluations stress success

In 2000, the state conducted the Missouri School Entry Assessment Project⁴ (project), which assessed the school-readiness of children as they entered public kindergarten classes, and collected data concerning pre-school experiences and access to health care.

² Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Early Childhood Development Act Program Guidelines & Administrative Manual*. Revised October 2000.

³ PAT is Parents as Teachers Program.

⁴ Bartman, Robert E. *School Entry Assessment Project: Report of Findings*, 2000, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The project found:

- Children who attend preschool or center care and participate in the program score above average upon entering kindergarten. This condition occurred with both minority and non-minority children and those attending low- and high-poverty level schools.
- Participating children with solely home-based care and education also scored significantly higher.
- Teachers rated special needs children as equally prepared as average children if they participated in the program and attended preschool and an early childhood special education program.
- Head Start children participating in the program and preschool score average or above when they enter kindergarten.

Department officials included a brief evaluation of each district's performance regarding the program in the Missouri School Improvement Program evaluation (evaluation).⁵ The school districts serving below the state's average program participation rate are given a "concern" on the evaluation. The number of concerns a district receives can affect accreditation. These evaluations have positively impacted the program at the school districts reviewed. In fiscal year 2001, approximately 52 percent of the evaluated districts increased the percentage of families served in the district from the prior year. Also, in fiscal year 2000, approximately 61 percent of the evaluated districts increased the percentage of families served from the previous year. In addition, 38 school districts continued to increase the percentage for up to 2 years after the review.

Performance
evaluations
improve program

Quotas do not consider factors impacting accomplishment

Quotas used to hold school districts accountable for the funding allocations are inaccurate and are unmanageable for some school districts. The quotas represent the target number of district families the program should serve and are used to determine how much of the final amount will be paid. Department personnel use the census data by district to set quotas for the next fiscal year. The quotas are calculated for each district as the larger of:

- The number of families seen by the district in the previous year.
- Sixty percent of the families reported in the census data.

As a result, if the district does not achieve the goal of 60 percent of the families reported in the census the personnel could use the same data for the 10-year period between censuses.

⁵ The Missouri School Improvement Program reviews approximately one-fifth of the Missouri school districts each year with a department team who visits the site, assesses strengths and needed improvements in education programs. This review also analyzes if a school is meeting its Parents as Teachers program goals.

Program officials will increase or decrease a quota with a written request from the district officials justifying the change. Acceptable reasons for changing quotas include: (1) a new industry bringing new employees to the community, (2) increased district contributions allowing the hiring of an additional parent educator, (3) a temporary reduction in parent educators, and (4) a loss of a large local employer prompting several families to leave the area.

Meeting quotas can be difficult for some school districts because of mitigating circumstances not considered by the department when establishing quotas.

Barriers to quota accomplishment

Our survey showed various barriers to meeting quotas including (1) religious beliefs, cultural differences and language differences, (2) parents choosing to home school their children, and (3) families choosing not to participate in the program. These families would be included in the census data and included in the department set quotas, despite the low probability of their participation.

Other non-state funded entities provide the same services

Child care centers, non-profit organizations, and other parent education programs serve the same populations targeted by school districts, which reduces the number of potentially participating families. The quotas are not adjusted for populations served by other early childhood or parent education programs. Information provided to us by the Parents as Teachers National Center (National Center) showed there were 568 Parents as Teachers programs in Missouri as of September 2001, but only 522 school districts in Missouri.

Low pay and benefits affect ability to recruit parent educators

Fifty percent of the inactive parent educators surveyed indicated they left the program to become full-time teachers for increased pay and benefits. Compensation levels for parent educators are determined by the individual school districts and depend upon funding received from the state and other sources. Districts receive only minimal guidance from the department or the National Center regarding educator salary.

Districts pay the educators on an annual salary basis, hourly basis, a set amount per family contact or a set amount per contractual agreement. The compensation of many parent educators is based on the number of participating families, which determines the amount of funding received from the state.

Not every district provides benefits for parent educators. Benefits can range from retirement, insurance and leave for a full-time educator to a personal day for a part-time educator. Differences also exist by district in defining full- or part-time employees. Some districts used a minimum 20 hours per week as the requirement for benefit coverage, while other districts used 30 hours per week.

The National Center's implementation guide showed the national average pay for a parent educator is \$17 per hour. This pay would equate to more than \$35,000 annually for a parent educator working 40 hours per week, 52 weeks a year; or just over \$17,500 for an educator working 20 hours per week, 52 weeks a year. Based on data collected by the Early Childhood Education team in fiscal year 1999, Missouri parent educator pay ranged from approximately \$20,000 to less than \$1,500 per educator per year.

Parent educator qualification requirements impair recruitment and service to families

At least eight districts require a college degree or state teacher certification to apply for a parent educator position. These requirements are stricter than department qualifications and limit the field of potential employees. Two of these districts have served only an average of 20 percent of the families in their districts. Table 1.1 shows the range of education and experience the department accepts for hiring parent educators.

Some school districts demand more than required

Table 1.1: Department Parent Educator Requirements

Education	Experience
State teacher certification and a 4-year degree in one of the following: Early Childhood Education Early Childhood Special Education Elementary Education Vocational Home Economics or Family and Consumer Sciences	Demonstrated ability in working with young children and their parents.
A 2-year associate degree or 2-year certificate program in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or Nursing	Demonstrated ability in working with young children and their parents.
Sixty college hours	Two years of successful experience in a program working with young children and their parents.
No college hours	Five years of successful experience in a program working with young children and their parents.

Source: Early Childhood Development Act Program Guidelines & Administrative Manual

The noted qualifications are only department suggestions. Department officials examine any candidate recommended by a district on a case-by-case basis. They will accept an individual that does not meet the qualifications if they believe the applicant can perform the duties of a parent educator.

In addition, all parent educator candidates have to complete a department-approved training program in parent education regardless of previous training and experience. The most common training used is the week long *Born to Learn*TM Institute provided by the National Center.

Parent educator morale

Forty-three percent of the current parent educators surveyed wanted more support from the district. Survey respondents stated that some administrators and school boards did not care about the program and did not provide the parent educators with office supplies or a work place. Parent educators also reported not receiving feedback from their superiors regarding job performance, which led them to seek employment elsewhere.

Another major concern of the parent educators was the hours spent on paperwork, recruiting, planning and extra time with the families without additional compensation. Some parent educators sought other employment because of night visits and time spent away from their own families. These problems discourage individuals from becoming a parent educator and force some parent educators to seek other employment because they cannot support themselves or their families on their salary. In some instances, parent educators were certified teachers and had difficulties maintaining the hours needed for certification.

The method of allocating funds to school districts does not work well

Using U. S. census data to allocate state funds to the districts is no longer working well since the program had to return unused funds at the end of fiscal year 2001, and the data loses its accuracy between census counts. A comparison of census counts showed population changes can make the census data obsolete. There was an average 33.9 percent increase or decrease in population by school district between the 1990 census and the 2000 census. Program officials obtain the most recent census data. However, the data often is a year or more old by the time it is received because additional analysis must be done to group the data by school district.

Census data is not timely and can be obsolete

To allocate funds, department personnel determine the number of children at each age from birth to 5 years by school district, and number of families per school district. These allocations do not always coincide with the needs of the districts. Program officials did not receive the 2000 census data until just before they had to set the fiscal year 2002 family service quotas. In some districts, this 2-year-old information no longer represented the number of families or children in the area. In fiscal year 2001, 39 districts served more than 100 percent of the district's families counted in the 2000 census data, which showed the district had more families than the department calculated. As a result, in fiscal year 2002, the program officials set quotas in 20 districts above

100 percent of the families, basing their calculation on the number of families served the previous year and not the outdated census data.

Program officials pay out the allocated funds to districts in three installments. The first two payments account for approximately 80 percent of the total allocation and are made in September and January. These payments are made without tracking how the funds are spent or if the districts are near their quotas. Program officials make the final payment in August after receiving the school's final report showing the number of families served and types of services provided. If the district does not meet its quota, program officials withhold some of the allocation.

Some funds were not used and were lost to the program

In fiscal year 2001, 85 schools had to return more than \$288,000 of \$30.3 million to the department after not reaching the number of families set by their quotas. Refunded amounts totaled \$66,000 at one school, and two schools returned all of the money they received. These funds could not be reallocated to other schools in need because the funds revert to the General Revenue Fund at the end of the fiscal year. Interim reporting of the number of families served could allow department officials to reallocate funds to other districts and prevent unused funding.

Improved
management
would preserve
funding

The department should evaluate other alternatives to enhance the funding methodology for the school districts. Some suggestions for enhancement include:

- Establish a grant system for allocating funds that would require districts to request the funds they need based on quotas they set.
- Contract out Parents as Teachers services in those districts that are not willing to support the program or have parent educator recruiting and retention problems.
- If a quota system is retained, develop data more clearly representative of the child population from birth to age five. This new data may involve identifying birth records and developing a birth rate adjustment factor for U. S. census data.
- If a quota system is retained, identify and account for existing competing programs in the school districts in establishing quotas.
- Create a best practices pamphlet to share with the districts.
- Use a mentoring approach to allow successful school districts to collaborate with struggling school districts.
- Recruit parent educators that can relate to religious, cultural and bilingual populations to improve participation by the applicable school districts.

Better oversight of school district expenditures is needed

Department officials do not require the school districts to submit actual expenditure reports for review and generally do not review expenditure data during monitoring visits or evaluation reviews. Department officials request expenditure information from the districts only after complaints or evaluation reviews indicate spending or accounting problems.

Districts are required to submit budgets as part of their yearly application process. The budget is prepared after the districts have been notified of the amount they will receive if they fulfill the set quota. The budgets include how the state funds will be spent on salaries, benefits, purchased services, materials and supplies, equipment and other areas. The budgets also include the number of full-time employees and the amount the district expects to contribute in each of the categories. Department officials do not always review the budgets submitted by the districts or request additional information for unusual or unreasonable items. In a limited review of some district budgets, auditors identified concerns a budget reviewer might question:

- One district did not submit the budget information for the last 2 years.
- One district doubled the amount budgeted for travel from fiscal year 2001 to 2002, and budgeted \$1,200 for professional storytellers for program parent meetings.
- One district budgeted normal school operation costs - such as audit services, equipment repair, building usage, advertising, printing and telephone services - out of program funds which were not direct costs to the program. The Program Guidelines & Administrative Manual states "Early Childhood Development Act funds can be used only for programs authorized under this Act."

Additionally, the total expenditures reported by a district for fiscal year 2001 were approximately \$8,000 less than the amount reimbursed by the department.

Better exposure of the program to the public could help in reaching potential participants

Program officials allow each district to recruit and publicize the Parents as Teachers program. Guidance is given by program officials when requested or when a problem is identified. For example, after a monitoring visit identified one district's participation problem, program officials forwarded a list of recruiting methods commonly used by a more successful program.

Twenty-five of the surveys indicated better statewide and local publicity would increase program exposure and enhance recruiting efforts. The National Center prepared a public service announcement and distributed it to 43 network and cable television stations. One respondent stated a public service announcement produced by the National Center was broadcast on television at 4:00 a.m.--making the timing and value of the announcement questionable.

Twenty-nine of the districts queried provided some innovative approaches to recruiting families. They used (1) billboards; (2) flyers in Welcome Wagon packets, local photography studios, and petting zoos; (3) contacts with real estate agencies, and local fire departments; (4) advertisements

on local cable television channels; and (5) booths at community and school events, including county fairs, and back-to-school nights.

The department could consider the following alternatives to increase awareness of the program.

- Develop working relationships with other state departments and programs targeting similar populations, and create a network to distribute information about the programs available for families with children.
- Encourage the districts to pool resources for county-wide advertising campaigns.
- Encourage school districts to contact local media to broadcast public service announcements about the program, and consider using some funding for a statewide publicity campaign.
- Prepare and distribute a best practices list showing other districts new and innovative methods to promote the program.
- Print and distribute information flyers for the districts and other state programs to pass on to potential participants. (The National Center has such flyers available or program officials could develop flyers to be reproduced as needed.)
- Target advertising to groups who are susceptible to cultural and language barriers to build trust and confidence in the program.

The department's performance goal may be unachievable

The department may not meet its goal to provide Parents as Teachers services to 60 percent of the families with children under age five by fiscal year 2005. Table 1.2 shows the status of the department's progress toward the goal.

Table 1.2: Number of Missouri Families Served in 2001 vs. Goal

	Number	Percentage
Missouri families	336,476	
Goal	201,885	60
Actual served	157,237	47
Increase needed to reach goal	44,468	

Source: Program data obtained from department officials

As the table shows, the department needs to serve 44,468 more families to meet the 60 percent goal. To achieve this goal by 2005, district personnel will have to serve an average of 11,162 additional families (44,648 divided by 4) a year. The program has not experienced an increase in the number of families of this magnitude since fiscal year 1991. In fiscal year 1991, the number of families participating increased by 10,702 (11 percent) from fiscal year 1990.

Conclusion

The Parents as Teachers program has been successful and well received; however, some enhancements could increase the program's accomplishments. School districts administering the program are not held accountable and do not always develop the program to reach the goals set by the department. The current goal of the department will not be achieved by 2005 unless changes are made to the program and more families are recruited on a statewide level.

Recommendations

We recommend the Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

- 1.1 Re-evaluate the methodology used to distribute the funds to the schools and determine if changes could be made to enhance the program. In the re-evaluation consider:
 - Establishing a grant system for allocating funds that would require districts to request the funds they need based on quotas they set.
 - Contracting out Parents as Teachers services in those districts that are not willing to support the program or have parent educator recruiting and retention problems.
 - Creating a best practices pamphlet to share with the districts.
 - Using a mentoring approach to allow successful school districts to collaborate with struggling school districts.
 - Recruiting parent educators that can relate to religious, cultural and bilingual populations to improve participation by the applicable school districts.
 - If a quota system is retained, developing data more clearly representative of the child population from birth to age five. This new data may involve identifying birth records and developing a birth rate adjustment factor for U. S. census data.
 - If a quota system is retained, identifying and accounting for existing competing programs in the school districts in establishing quotas.
- 1.2 Monitor the districts' expenditures of program funds to ensure these funds are properly used for the program and proper records are maintained.
- 1.3 Evaluate the following alternatives to increase publicity of the program on a statewide level:
 - Develop working relationships with other state departments and programs targeting similar populations, and create a network to distribute information about the programs available for families with children.

- Encourage the districts to pool their resources for county-wide advertising campaigns.
- Encourage school districts to contact local media to broadcast public service announcements about the program, and consider using some funding for a statewide publicity campaign.
- Prepare and distribute a best practices list showing other districts new and innovative methods to promote their program.
- Print and distribute information flyers for the districts and other state programs to pass on to potential participants. (The National Center has such flyers available or program officials could develop flyers to be reproduced as needed.)
- Target advertising to those groups who are susceptible to cultural and language barriers to build their trust and confidence in the program.

1.4 Review the feasibility of meeting the department's performance goal and change the goal to a more achievable level if warranted.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Responses

We concur with your conclusion in the recent audit of the Parents as Teachers program that the program has been successful in reaching families and providing services. We have a very dedicated staff at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Department staff works with an equally dedicated cadre of parent educators across our state to help parents better understand how to be their child's first teacher and get their child off to the best start possible.

1.1 *Re-evaluate the methodology used to distribute the funds to schools and determine if changes could be made to enhance the program.*

- *In the beginning, quotas for school districts were set using a percentage of the census figure for families with children of an eligible age. (Example: The first year of statewide implementation of Parents as Teachers (PAT), quotas were set at 10% of the number of families with children birth to age three according to the existing census figures.) This method has not been used for several years. Quotas are now set based on the number of services provided by the school district in the previous year. The census percentages provide a point of reference to help set local and statewide goals.*
- *Districts are allowed to request an increase in their quotas based on a documented need. Based on the level of appropriations, districts are then able to receive additional funding.*

- *Districts have always been allowed to contract services out to another agency to provide Parents as Teachers services. An application is available for this type of program implementation. A few small districts have also formed co-ops to provide PAT services.*
- *The Parents As Teachers National Center (PATNC) is currently involved in a project to set program standards for Parents as Teachers programs. From these standards, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will develop a “best practices” pamphlet to distribute to districts and parent educators.*
- *DESE staff will grant variances to certain individuals who do not completely meet the required qualifications for becoming a parent educator based on bilingual, cultural, etc. needs. Often we contact the PATNC regional coordinators and request special mentoring for these parent educators.*
- *DESE has met with a state demographer from Office of Administration, Division of Budget and Planning, to request updated census information throughout the census cycle. This will be used to check the accuracy of census information on an on-going basis.*

1.2 Monitor the districts’ expenditures of program funds to ensure these funds are properly used for the program and proper records are maintained.

- *DESE is in the process of developing a final expense form that districts will be required to return with other end-of-year reports.*

1.3 To increase publicity of the program on a statewide level:

- *A public service announcement (PSA) video featuring Bob Costas is available from PATNC for \$5.00. This PSA was distributed to television stations throughout the country.*
- *Funds for a statewide publicity campaign are not available; however, DESE staff is considering writing a grant to finance such an endeavor.*
- *DESE is currently working with MO Department of Social Services (DSS) to ascertain how DSS can help recruit families for PAT. Recently a flyer describing PAT and information on how to enroll was distributed by Medicaid. DSS staff will join us at our PAT Advisory Council in September to discuss how they can provide additional support to PAT.*
- *The entire PAT curriculum, including brochures and other recruitment materials, is available in Spanish. In addition, some local school districts translate materials into other languages pertinent to their area.*

1.4 Review the feasibility of meeting the department's performance goal and change the goal to a more achievable level if warranted.

- DESE performance goals are reviewed on an annual basis. This suggestion will be taken into consideration.*

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to determine if the Parents as Teachers program is effectively managed and state appropriated funds were spent as intended.

Scope

Our audit work included activities of the Parents as Teachers program for fiscal years 2000 and 2001. We reviewed:

- Information maintained by the department regarding quotas and the number of children served by each school district in the state.
- A sample of files for school districts maintained by program officials including budget information and final reports of services provided by school districts.
- Census data regarding the number of children in the state of Missouri.
- Information maintained at the National Center regarding early childhood development programs in Missouri and other states.
- Monitoring reports prepared by the National Center and the department and Missouri School Improvement Program reviews.

Methodology

To accomplish the audit objectives we:

- Obtained the quotas for each school district and the number of children served by each school district for fiscal years 2000 and 2001.
- Determined how the quotas are set and whether they appear reasonable.
- Analyzed school district performance in relation to quotas.
- Obtained information from the National Center regarding how other states handle their programs and the number of children seen by other states.
- Determined and compared the number of births per county to the recruitment numbers of the school districts.

APPENDIX I

- Obtained and analyzed resources, recruitment methods, and computer systems information of the school districts.
- Surveyed a sample of program coordinators, parent educators and inactive parent educators.
- Visited the National Center and discussed monitoring procedures. Obtained a list of all schools monitored in the last 2 years and planned for monitoring in the current year. We also examined some monitoring reports.
- Obtained and reviewed the program goals.
- Discussed with the early childhood development staff what improvements/changes they think are necessary to improve the program.
- Evaluated management controls pertinent to funding allocations and oversight of school district expenditures.

BACKGROUND

The 83rd General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 658, the Early Childhood Development Act, which authorizes the administration of a program of services for children below kindergarten entry and their parents.¹ This program has become the Parents as Teachers program administered by the Division of School Improvement - Early Childhood Education, within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The principal laws and rules for this program are Sections 178.691 through 178.699, RSMo 2000.

The Early Childhood Education Act programs also provide a means of meeting the first National Education Goal regarding readiness for school. By helping parents to increase their confidence and parenting skills, they are better able to support their children's education and development before and after school entry. Periodic screenings increase parents' understanding of their children's developmental progress, as well as alert them to any possible delays. Early intervention for identified problems help improve chances children will enter school with "healthy minds and bodies."²

Periodic monitoring of a child's development is the foundation of educational guidance to parents. A review with each participating family of their child's progressive developmental profile significantly reduces the possibility the child will go through preschool years with an undetected developmental delay. Skills and abilities are developing rapidly during this time. Since many causes of slow development can be treated effectively and efficiently if detected early, it is important they be identified as early as possible. In addition, the recurrent monitoring and review can signify to parents that their child is progressing at a normal or advanced rate of development and can also give direction on how to support and encourage continued growth.³

¹ Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Early Childhood Development Act Program Guidelines & Administrative Manual*. Revised October 2000, Foreword.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 3.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

A. CURRENT PARENT EDUCATORS

A survey questionnaire was sent to 163 current parent educators of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) programs. A total of 151 responded to the questionnaires giving a response rate of 93 percent. The results of this survey are as follows:

Question	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total
What is your affiliation with the school district?		
Teacher with the district.	20	13
Other employee with the district.	45	30
No affiliation with the school other than as a Parent Educator, employed in Early Childhood field.	76	50
Other.	10	7
Are you considered a full-time or part-time Parent Educator?		
Full-time	55	36
Part-time	96	64
How many hours per week do you spend as a Parent Educator?		
Less than 10 hours per week	2	1
10-20 hours per week	71	47
21-30 hours per week	19	13
31-40 hours per week	46	30
Over 40 hours per week	10	7
No response	3	2
How many families are you assigned to work with?		
10 or less families	10	7
11-20 families	5	3
21-30 families	13	8
31-40 families	13	8
41-99 families	91	60
More than 99 families	16	11
No response	5	3

Source: Current Educator responses to SAO survey

APPENDIX III

Question	Percent	
	Yes	No
Do you feel that your PAT program is successfully reaching families with newborns?	78	22
Do you use a computer system/program to track information for the PAT program?	53	47
Do you feel you are allowed adequate time to spend with the families?	88	12
Do you feel you are allowed adequate time to complete all the tasks necessary as a Parent Educator?	61	39
Do you feel the school district supplies the program with sufficient resources to complete your job duties and properly serve your contacts?		
Yes	57	
No, more financial support is needed		26
No, more significant support is needed		10
No, both types of support is needed		4
No		3
Please check the recruiting methods used by your district to recruit families in the PAT program.		
Participant referral	91	
Displays at local functions (back to school nights)	85	
Fliers to local health departments/hospitals	82	
Fliers to daycare centers/preschools	76	
Fliers posted throughout the district	68	
Fliers to K-3 rd grade students	64	
Advertised in a local newspaper	61	
Fliers to local library	58	
Door-to-door introductions	28	
Advertised on a local Website	25	
Distributed door hangers	20	
School or other newsletter	7	
Local cable channel/television	5	
Billboards	2	
Fliers at real estate agents	1	

APPENDIX III

Question	Percent	
	Yes	No
Do you feel the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Early Childhood team provides adequate resources, guidance, and support for the program and parent?	83	17
Do you feel the quotas set by the Early Childhood Development team are/were attainable and reasonable for your district?	86	14
Do you feel the PAT program is accomplishing goals?	90	10

Source: Current Educator responses to SAO survey

APPENDIX III

Question/Responses	Number of Responses
What do you feel contributed to the success or breakdown of your district's Parents as Teachers program in regards to meeting quotas?	
Success (Top three answers)	
Dedicated Parent Educators/good leadership	20
Good support from school district	13
Good recruitment and positive word of mouth	12
Breakdown (Top three answers)	
Parents not interested in program or no time to participate	8
Turnover of Parent Educators	7
Lack of coordinator interest/administrative support	6
What improvements would you make to your district's Parents as Teachers program?	
Hire more Parent Educators/maintain Parent Educators	13
Increased pay for Parent Educators	10
Expand/improve facilities	10
No improvement needed, district does a great job	10
What successes do you think the Parents as Teachers program has had?	
Improving parenting skills and providing them resources	56
Reaching children in need and identifying problems early	40
Prepare children to be interactive, develops social skills	10
What improvement would you make to the Parents as Teachers program as a whole?	
Provide a pay scale equal to a teacher's salary	11
Expand program, increase home visits for 3-5 year olds	10
Reduce the amount of paperwork	10
Increase marketing and advertisement of program	9

Source: Current Educator survey responses

APPENDIX III

B. COORDINATORS

A survey questionnaire was sent to 52 current coordinators of Parents as Teachers programs. A total of 64 responded to the questionnaires giving a response rate of 123 percent because the questionnaire was shared with other coordinators. The results of this survey are as follows:

Question	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total
How many hours per week do you spend on the Parents as Teachers Program?		
less than one hour per week	5	8
1 - 5 hours per week	12	19
more than 5 hours per week	45	70
more than 40 hours per week	2	3

Source: Coordinator survey responses

Question	Percent	
	Yes	No
Do you feel that your Parents as Teachers program is successfully reaching the families with newborns?	86	14
Do you use a computer system/program to track information for the Parents as Teachers program?	48	52
Do you feel the Parent Educators in your district are motivated to help this program succeed?	98	2
Does the district provide funds for the Parents as Teachers program in addition to the monies received from the state program?	75	25
Do you obtain financial support for the Parents as Teachers program from sources outside the district's funds?	24	76
Do you feel the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Early Childhood team provides adequate resources, guidance, and support for the program and Parent Educators?	83	17
Do you feel the quotas set by the Early Childhood Development team are/were attainable and reasonable for your district?	84	16
Do you feel the Parents as Teachers program is accomplishing its goals?	91	9

Source: Coordinator responses to SAO survey

APPENDIX III

Question/Responses	Number of Responses
What do you feel contributed to the success or breakdown of your district's Parents as Teachers program in regards to meeting quotas?	
Success (Top three answers)	
Good Parent Educators/good program	13
Good word of mouth for the program	5
Hired a new Parent Educator	4
Breakdown (Top five answers)	
Lots of turnover in program	6
No superintendent/administrative support	5
Not enough qualified Parent Educators/maintaining current educators	4
Quotas not accurate, need to be lowered	4
Change in family/community demographics	4
What improvements would you make to your district's Parents as Teachers program?	
Maintain Parent Educators	10
Increased pay for Parent Educators/increased program funding	8
More space and/or better facilities for the program to use	6
What successes do you think the Parents as Teachers program has had?	
Locating special needs families	12
Increased parent involvement in school	5
Increasing parenting skills and knowledge	4
What improvement would you make to the Parents as Teachers program as a whole?	
Increased pay for Parent Educators/increased funding for program	8
Add funding for advertising or increased statewide advertising	5
Reduce the amount of paperwork	4

Source: Coordinator responses to SAO survey

APPENDIX III

C. INACTIVE PARENT EDUCATORS

A survey questionnaire was sent to 140 inactive parent educators of the Parents as Teachers programs. A total of 36 responded to the questionnaires giving a response rate of 26 percent. The results of this survey are as follows:

Question	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total
What was your affiliation with the school district?		
Teacher with the district	5	14
Other employee with the district	7	19
No affiliation with the school other than as a Parent Educator, employed in Early Childhood field.	23	64
Other	1	3
Were you considered a full-time or part-time Parent Educator?		
Full-time	10	28
Part-time	26	72
How many hours per week did you spend as a Parent Educator?		
Less than 20 hours per week	3	8
20 hours per week	15	42
35 hours per week	5	14
40 hours per week	6	17
Other	7	19
How many families were you assigned to work with?		
Less than 20 families	3	10
20-30 families	3	10
31-40 families	10	32
41-60 families	6	19
More than 60 families	9	29

Source: Inactive Parent Educator responses to SAO survey

APPENDIX III

Question	Percent	
	Yes	No
Did you feel that your Parents as Teachers program was successfully reaching the families with newborns?	86	14
Did you feel you were allowed adequate time to spend with the families?	83	17
Did you feel you were allowed adequate time to complete all the tasks necessary as a Parent Educator?	64	36
Did you feel that the school district supplied the program with sufficient resources to complete your job duties and properly serve you?	61	39
Did you feel the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Early Childhood team provided adequate resources, guidance, and support for the program and Parent Educators?	80	20
Did you feel the quotas set by the Early Childhood Development team were attainable for your district?	70	30
Did you feel the Parents as Teachers program was accomplishing its goals?	83	17

Source: Inactive Parent Educator responses to SAO survey

Question/Responses	Number of Responses
Please tell us why you are no longer a Parent Educator.	
Left to become a full-time teacher	13
Left for a better paying position	10
Left due to the hours required in the evenings	7
Left due to the lack of administrative support	4
What do you feel contributed to the success or breakdown of your district's Parents as Teachers program in regards to meeting quotas?	
Success (Top two answers)	
District's/coordinator's support	7
Good staff/hard working Parent Educators	5
Breakdown (Top two answers)	
Administrators and district staff did not understand the benefits of the program.	4

APPENDIX III

Question/Responses	Number of Responses
Quotas too high, required 50+ hours to meet the needs of the families.	2
What improvements would you make to your district's Parents as Teachers program?	
Higher pay for Parent Educators/increased funding	8
More supervisory participation/administrative support	6
Parent Educator positions should be full-time with benefits	5
What successes do you think the Parents as Teachers program has had?	
Identify developmental delays and early intervention	11
Better informed parents/builds parent's confidence	9
Developmental information given to families	8
Parents more comfortable with the school	6
What improvement would you make to the Parents as Teachers program as a whole?	
Higher pay for Parent Educators/increased funding	7
Use certified teachers/degreed Parent Educators	4
Parent Educators should be full-time positions with benefits	3

Source: Inactive Parent Educator responses to SAO survey